

MINUTES  
**CALIFORNIA BIODIVERSITY COUNCIL**  
December 7, 1995  
Cora Harper Community Center  
841 Barstow Road, Barstow, California

**Executive Council Members Present**

Douglas Wheeler, Resources Agency  
Hershel Read, Natural Resource Conservation Service  
Robert Peyton, University of California  
Ken Jones, Department of Parks and Recreation  
Al Wright, Bureau of Land Management  
Pat Meehan, Department of Conservation  
Mietek Kolipinski, National Park Service  
Tony Buono, U.S. Geological Survey  
Wayne White, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Chauncey Poston, California Association of Resource Conservation Districts  
Jerry Harmon, San Diego Association of Governments  
Bob Haussler, California Energy Commission  
Bill Maze, San Joaquin Valley Regional Supervisors Association  
Michael Fischer, California Coastal Conservancy  
G. Lynn Sprague, U.S. Forest Service  
Dale Hoffman-Floerke, Department of Water Resources  
Alisa Greene, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
Frank Michny, Bureau of Reclamation  
Chuck Raysbrook, Department of Fish and Game

**CALL TO ORDER**

Secretary Doug Wheeler called the meeting to order.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR THE SEPTEMBER 22, 1995 MEETING**

The minutes were approved as submitted.

**REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

John Amodio, Chairman of the Executive Committee for the council, reported on the draft strategic plan, referring the council's attention to the 1996-1997 Recommended Action Plan Summary, Recommended Goals, Description of New Projects Proposed, and the Current Staff Commitment Chart. From the council's Memorandum of

Understanding the original goals, the Executive Committee recommended the following six goals:

1. Coordinate or facilitate forums for focusing on key issues related to conserving biological diversity and maintaining economic viability. Strategies would be developed and implemented through regional or local institutions.
2. Coordinate or facilitate participation of member agency staff, local public and private organizations, and landowners in biodiversity conservation.
3. Coordinate or facilitate sharing of information and resources to support regional strategies, institutions, and practices necessary to conserve biological diversity.
4. Coordinate or facilitate goals and strategies for land management, habitat restoration, land use planning, and land and reserve acquisition and exchange among member agencies and local jurisdictions.
5. Coordinate or facilitate cooperative research, monitoring, inventory and assessment.
6. Coordinate or facilitate training, education and outreach for conserving biological diversity (social, economic and biological issues).

The Committee requested the council's approval on proceeding forward with the strategic plan and reminded the members to reflect on their agency's capability of dedicating additional staff time as a result of the need for an additional four and a half individuals per year to meet the proposed additional tasks.

Mr. Wheeler informed the council that one of the proposals for 1996-1997 was to expand the frequency of Biodiversity News. It was emphasized that this is one of the most important functions of the council in that it serves to better inform the public about the council's activities. Members were reminded that additional suggestions for broadening the distribution of Biodiversity News are welcome. The Biodiversity News is also reachable from the Council's home page.

Mr. Bob Haussler, California Energy Commission, announced his agency's commitment to make additional information and staff available in support of the council's efforts.

Mr. Amodio noted that two of the proposed actions, the Education Committee and the Science Committee, would not require additional staff because most agencies already have existing efforts in those areas.

The council approved the Executive Committee to proceed with the plan.  
**COUNCIL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **California Conservation Partnership**

Chauncey Poston announced the formation of the California Conservation Partnership. A conservation partnership with a mission to coordinate the resources and expertise to help the people of California conserve, enhance and use natural resources in a sustainable and economically-viable manner.

### **Coastal Conservancy**

Michael Fischer announced the Trusts for Public Lands has recently initiated a quarter million dollar small grants program for land trusts and that the Coastal Conservancy is preparing to add a quarter million dollars over two years. This money is to be made available to local land trusts along California's coastal area. He requested the Council refer suitable projects to his agency.

Mr. Fischer also announced that the Coastal Commission and Coastal Conservancy has started to market a license plate. Application forms are available from Mr. Fischer.

### **Biodiversity News**

Mr. Wheeler referred the council's attention to the fact that this issue of Biodiversity News includes a calendar of events for the upcoming period and recommended that members publicize their information in future issues.

### **LOCAL PRESENTATIONS**

#### **An Overview of Cooperative Planning and Management in the Mojave Desert and Colorado Bioregions**

Dr. William Presch, Director of the California Desert Studies Consortium and a member of the faculty at California State Fullerton, moderated the presentations by Henri Bisson from the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Desert District and Marv Jensen from the National Park Service, Mojave National Preserve.

Mr. Bisson explained that the area under discussion is approximately 25 million acres, about half of which is BLM-administered lands. There are 5 million acres of Defense Department land, another 5 million acres of National Park Service lands, and the remainder is private land. There has been rancorous debate regarding the desert and the future of some of these lands. This debate culminated last year with passage of the Desert Protection Act which transferred ownership of 3 million acres of BLM lands to

the National Park Service and created 3.6 million acres of wilderness on BLM lands and additional wilderness on National Park Service lands. Adding to the debate, in 1989 the Desert Tortoise was listed, and a year or so ago the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designated approximately 4 million acres as critical tortoise habitat.

Using a visual presentation, Mr. Bisson reviewed two plans, the first of which focused on the Northern and Eastern Colorado. This planning region has about 5.5 million acres, most of it is public land, either BLM or Defense Department. Only about 16 percent of the region is private land, without incorporated cities or towns. This multi-species plan addresses the issues of the desert tortoise, desert bighorn sheep, and primary concerns related to impacts on the ability of the public to travel on roads and routes on public lands. A working group has been established and a draft of the plan will probably be released sometime next summer.

Mr. Bisson then reviewed the West Mojave Plan. This planning region includes approximately nine and a half million acres, 3.6 million of which is BLM-administered public lands and 2.6 million is administered by the Defense Department. The purpose of this plan was to define a regional strategy for conserving plant and animal species in an effort to comply with the Endangered Species Act and to provide for appropriate resource use and community expansion. There are approximately 32 different agencies involved as partners or affected by decisions that result from this plan. An administrative working draft has been issued to these partners.

While the plan is not yet ready for public review, Mr. Bisson informed the council that a meeting was held in Barstow on December 6, 1995, which was attended by people from the working group and other concerned citizens. Commitments were developed to work with 29 stakeholder groups to resolve specific issues dealing with mining, the mitigation fee and grazing, as well as other issues.

Mr. Marv Jensen, of the National Park Service, reviewed the necessary transition process which resulted from the Desert Protection Act, whereby some of the BLM land was changed to the jurisdiction of the National Park Service. The joint management planning effort resulted in a federal planning team of eight people, three from the National Park Service, three from BLM, and two from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This planning team is in place in Barstow and has already completed the agency scoping meetings and are now expecting to publish the summary within a few months. Although the Desert Protection Act authorized formation of advisory commissions, they have not yet been established. In the meantime, the plan will continue with focus groups, technical review teams and the public process of development of alternatives.

## **Panel Discussion**

Dr. Presch introduced three panelists to provide discussion on incentives and disincentives for local participation in regional planning processes.

To provide a perspective from city government, Brian Hawley, from the City of Lancaster, reviewed two mandates which cities face relating to this issue. One is the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act, and the second is project streamlining requirements as set forth by state laws, goals and objectives. The West Mojave Coordinating Plan was viewed as satisfying these two mandates. One of the biggest incentives for this was its tremendous cost savings, not only in hard dollars but in time savings as well. Some of the disincentives were that the process gets too involved and too complicated and often expands beyond what the original objectives were. Although the time frame for completion has extended beyond the original target date, the cities remain optimistic regarding this approach.

The next perspective presented was from county government. Lorelei Oviatt, from the Planning Department of Kern County, expressed county concerns which mirror some of the issues that the BLM has had to contend with: grazing, mining, oil, and agriculture. As disincentives to county participation, she cited lack of resources available to counties to be involved in all the different types of regional planning efforts, concern for accountability, and disregard for the local issues of economic health of the county. As incentives for county involvement, she suggested streamlining, pooling federal and state and private funds, and providing an available outlet for coordination.

The perspective from public stakeholders was presented by Donna Thomas from the Eastern Kern Resource Conservation District. She listed the following disincentives:

1. Distrust among participants on many levels and many issues.
2. Distrust of the lead agency and suspicions of a hidden agenda. A sense of the plan being imposed, rather than developed by all involved.
3. Size of the planning area.
4. Various groups feel the burden of the plan is on them.
5. Economics.
6. Lack of consensus on scientific studies.
7. Court rulings on the status of the Mojave ground squirrel and effects of changes in the Endangered Species Act.
8. Frustration with the draft.

She listed the following incentives:

1. Need for the plan
2. Desire for an interagency approach
3. Desire to reduce red tape and expensive delays
4. Desire to avoid piecemeal, short-term management approaches
5. Multispecies approach
6. Desire for flexibility in the plan

A question-and-answer period followed the panel discussion, including an extensive discussion by Eugene Kulosza, president of Riverside Cement Company and

Chairman of the Desert Mining Advisory, and Mr. Hawley, Ms. Oviatt, and Dr. Presch regarding the time period required to obtain permits and to get an EIS.

## **The Legacy Program**

Dr. Allan Falconer, from Utah State University College of National Resources, provided the Council members with an overview of the Legacy Program. He explained that the Mojave Desert Ecosystem Initiative is funded by the Department of Defense under their Legacy money which is for environmental work. The Department of Defense contracted with the Bureau of Land Management, which passed this project through its landscape ecological monitoring and analysis center. The Mojave Desert Initiative Legacy Project is intended to be specifically a cooperative database.

Using visual aids, Dr. Falconer reviewed the four phases of the Project:

1. Phase one, set up the network.
2. Phase two, set up the bibliographic reference system.
3. Phase three, put onto the network those databases which are considered to be of sufficient general importance and interest to be of value to the user.
4. Phase four, determine data gaps and fill the gaps.

To conclude his presentation, Dr. Falconer demonstrated how the system would work and what information is already available on the Mojave as an ecoregion. Dr. Falconer welcomed all participation and recommended that the council, through each agency, contact Utah State University, the BLM or the U.S. Geological Survey with available information.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

### **Gene Kulosza, Riverside Cement Company and Mojave Desert Mining Advisory Council**

Mr. Kulosza suggested the council expand its membership to include private representation, specifically to include industry and the military.

He also expressed his concern regarding the West Mojave Management Plan. As part of the working group involved with the development of this Plan, he explained that comments were made from the mining standpoint, as well as from additional views, but it was felt that these comments were not addressed. While 15 additional comments have been submitted by this group to be considered for the development of the new

plan, he expressed concern regarding remaining problems with the West Mojave Management Plan.

**Rick Aguayo, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service**

Mr. Aguayo cited declining budgets, staff and funding and suggested the need for partnerships be developed to assist in the planning process, using each agency's expertise to provide additional information.

**Al Wright, Bureau of Land Management**

Mr. Wright, responding to Mr. Kulosza's concerns, reviewed the desert plan's goal to expand the land use planning concepts to include the different interest groups, the cultures of the people in the desert, and the pressures faced in that area. He cited the establishment of the working group which will address the 29 issues as a positive step toward a greater degree of access to participate and help design how these issues are addressed.

**Tim Read, Bureau of Land Management**

Mr. Read announced the cancellation of the field trip due to adverse weather conditions.

**SCHEDULE OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Biodiversity Council will be held in Monterey on March 27 and 28, 1996.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.